

MEMORANDUM FOR THE RECORD

18 January 1969

SUBJECT: Meeting on Possible Reduction of BBC Coverage. Action to be taken by FBIS in the face of inevitable BBC budget cuts.

Present:

The general situation was reviewed and the following points were brought out:

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(a) BBC Monitoring Service is apparently quite alarmed over the expected or actual reduction in their budget as evidenced by the urgent manner in which the meeting has been set up for mid-March.

(b) FBIS is interested in only two aspects of the BBC operation. These are: all monitoring coverage and monitors' texting; and the communications from Cyprus to London. All other BBC MS activities are extraneous to FBIS requirements. It was recognized, however, that BBC MS must provide a mechanism for handling its monitored product, as well as the various essential support activities such as engineering and crumbing.

(c) If a severe budget cut has to be made in spite of repeated representations, FBIS to BBC, DD/I to British [] and even the DCI to Viscount Alexander, it will do no good to reiterate the necessity for preserving coverage in the March joint meeting. Campbell is unquestionably faced with the problem of reducing his activities to fit the funds available. It would seem, therefore, that FBIS should attempt to assist him in solving his problem in a manner that will be least detrimental to our overall coverage.

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It was decided that FBIS should scrutinize the following:

(a) The possibility of relieving BBC of its Baltic and Northwest USSR coverage through the establishment of an FBIS station at Stockholm, Helsinki, or Copenhagen, in that order of preference.

(b) The possibility of relieving the BBC MS from the expenditure of £ 25,000 per annum for the Cable & Wireless circuit. As a first proposal, and provided Commo could make the necessary arrangements, FBIS would prefer to file its material from Cyprus via the State Department communications center at Nicosia to Heidelberg for relay to London and Washington. In this instance it was noted that the Heidelberg to London circuits are already well loaded and an additional line would probably have to be secured.

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This is very likely to fail since C & W maintains the right to transmit Cyprus originated traffic and would not likely be willing to waive this agreement at the cost of £ 25,000 per year to them. FBIS, in that case, might be forced to adopt the simplest solution of assuming the BBC contract with C & W.

(c) A careful review of the broadcasting of the countries to which BBC is presently listening in comparison to present BBC coverage of those countries and languages. This review should be designed to transferring whole languages and/or services or countries to existing FBIS bureaus. For example: coverage of Hungary might be transferred in its entirety to the Mediterranean Bureau or coverage of the Vatican might be transferred to Frankfurt. These are merely illustrative examples.

(d) Consideration should also be given to BBC's problem of paying for receipt of the TASS Helioschreiber Services and the upcoming problem of Reuters' exclusive agreement with DPA.

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[] was asked to prepare the customary salutary statement concerning BBC NS effectiveness and efficiency. He was also asked to prepare a statement on the more serious BBC NS deficiencies in the handling of broadcast material.

[] was asked to prepare the analysis of BBC coverage and broadcasting of the countries for which BBC has assumed responsibility.

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[] was asked to contact Commo on the feasibility of filing Cyprus material via Heidelberg.

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[] was asked to speak to Mr. Snigel of State Department on the best method of approaching the Department for permission to enter Sweden, Finland, and Denmark, it being understood that this agreement should be secured before actual reception tests would be conducted.

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Chief, FBIS

cc: AD/O

AMW:jmb

- 1 - each present at meeting
- 1 - AD/O
- 1 - BBC file
- 1 - Exec file ✓